Introduction

As Chairman of the ‘Moor Pond Woods Project Steering Group’ I am delighted to have this opportunity to celebrate the hard work of our community. Since the project was first suggested in 1999, and the ‘Friends of Moor Pond Wood’ group was formed in 2001, we have seen remarkable progress. The project has attracted £120,000 of investment into our community, and has created a resource that not only provides recreational space, but has also conserved and enhanced aspects of our historical and natural heritage.

If you are not familiar with the project, read about what we have achieved in the last ten years, and I warmly invite you to join us—so that the next 10 years can be as productive.

Stephen Walker

Open Day

Saturday, 12th March 2011.
In The Bradbury Suite at the Papplewick and Linby Village Hall. From 11:00am until 3:00pm you can view the newly commissioned model of the project area (fashioned by Robin Barton, in memory of Wendy, his late wife). There will be a display of photographs and maps, showing work that has been undertaken on the project. Refreshments will be available. You will also have the opportunity to take a guided tour of the site at 12:00 and 2:00pm. Come and find out more about the history and wildlife of the project area, and see the work that has been completed so far.

“We congratulate the group on past achievements, and wish you every success in the future.”

David McCracken, Chairman
Papplewick Parish Council
In the late 18th century a Scottish entrepreneur called George Robertson built up a system of millponds and channels (called leats) to store water for, and feed water to, his 6 large cotton spinning mills. In the 1790s he installed some of the first Steam Engines to be used in factories. The industrial revolution had come to Papplewick! By the 1820s the mills were no longer profitable, and the system fell into disrepair. Eventually most of the buildings were pulled down and the system of ponds and channels were planted with trees.

Today, the Moor Pond Woods Project area is owned by The Co-operative Wholesale Society, and managed by Nottinghamshire County Council. In 1999 Papplewick Parish Council agreed to enter a partnership to develop the project area for the benefit of the community, as it’s Millennium project. The Friends of Moor Pond Wood group was inaugurated in 2001 to support the project.

The aims of the project are (a) to improve access to the site and a network of footpaths (b) to conserve and improve the habitats for the benefit of wildlife, (c) To explore, record and (if possible) conserve the archaeological remains and (d) to provide information that will allow visitors to interpret the site.

The project area stretches a mile from north to south, following the floor of the Leen Valley. The northern section (1, on the map) is known as Papplewick Dam Wood. It is the site of the pond that supplied Castle (Top) Mill. Moor Pond Wood is on the site of the pond which stood at the junction of Moor Road and Papplewick Lane (3, on the map). It is separated from Linby Lane by a thin strip of woodland called Dam Banks (2, on the map). To the south of Papplewick Lane is a small wood called Grange Cottage Wood.
Maureen Barker, has been involved in the project since its inception. She writes: “I’m proud to have been involved with the Moor Pond Woods Project since its inception, initially as Clerk to the Parish Council and subsequently as Secretary to the Steering Committee.

I have always been interested in archaeology and so it has been great to be involved with the project, which is giving us an insight into early village life and the workings of the mills and water system along the River Leen. Workdays have always been fun, even in the worst of weather conditions and I have learnt so much from Lee Scudder, of Nottinghamshire County Council, and other members.

As a representative of the project I have also met so many like-minded, interesting and lovely people involved in some amazing projects around Nottinghamshire.

We are so lucky in Papplewick having such a wealth of interesting countryside around us where you can wander through a peaceful woodland listening to the birds, stand high on an old spoil tip looking across the county and sit overlooking a pond enjoying the wildfowl.”

A comment from Joyce Kendall, first Chair of the Moor Pond Woods Steering Group: “In 1999 the Parish Council agreed to take forward the Moor Pond Woods Project as one of its Millennium celebrations. I am so very glad on its 10th anniversary to see how it has developed.

I congratulate the Steering Committee for its enthusiasm and hard work. We are also indebted to Lee Scudder and the Leen Valley Conservation Volunteers for their sheer determination and hard work. The planning of each stage of the project has been superb and for Papplewick Village it has been an imaginative project. It has brought people together with a common goal. As a village we are short of young people but the Moor Pond Wood project is a vivid example of how history can show its relationship to the present, which hopefully will be appreciated and taken forward by future generations.”

Diane Townsend is a local resident, who writes, “Joining ‘The Friends of Moor Pond Wood’, has been an interesting experience: Discovering hidden archaeology sites, planting wild flowers and trees, and working with other volunteers and maintaining our local heritage.”

The ‘Friends of Moor Pond Wood’ group was a founder member of the Greenwood Community Forum, an umbrella organisation supporting volunteers that work in the Greenwood Community Forest. Gill Grieveson, the Greenwood Community Liaison Officer, writes, “The Moor Pond Woods Project has brought incredible benefits to the Greenwood Community Forest, within which it lies. The group has regenerated the site and improved the biodiversity of this important wildlife corridor as well as bringing the history to life through interpretation and exposing archaeological features. Improving footpaths and producing interpretation boards has meant many more people can visit a natural area close to where they live.

Roy Preston has lived in Papplewick for many years. He writes: “Papplewick in the 1940’s was a near perfect place for children to grow up, very little traffic and a lot to do outdoors. We had the woods, river, ponds and dams, the moors and the Lido and many farms. In the village we had a sweet shop and the post office.

Two woods were the favourite places to play – Big Wood (Moor Pond) and Little Wood (next to Grange Cottages). The River Leen was a big attraction – fishing and Tarzan type ropes over the water. The Castle Mill dam was another good fishing spot. The mill was empty and unused, a great place to explore. The moors stretched from Forest Lane to Goosedale. Most of the farms had large milking herds and cart horses did most of the work. Watching a farm at work and seeing crops grow and harvested remains in your mind forever.

Colin Womble has been a Parish Councillor throughout the project. He writes, “what the project has meant to me personally is completely eclipsed by what it has meant to the parish overall. It has proved to be an excellent example of community co-operation, enabling parishioners and those from further afield to enjoy the varied ecological and historical aspects of this site. Equally, it has allowed the unravelling and recording of events that are of historical importance nationally. Overall, it has raised the profile of Papplewick locally and nationally, which reflects admirably on those people directly associated with the project and the parish as a whole.”

Maggie Else, a Parish Councillor, writes, “Moor Pond Wood is first and foremost a unique area of historical archaeological importance to the linen and cotton industry in the midst of our village, but it’s much more than that. It has everything; the River Leen babbling through, it is home to several protected species including water voles and English crayfish, the indigenous woodland supports an abundance of bird and plant life and several pretty ponds are home to an array of dragonflies and Iris. It’s a pleasure to walk through the project area at any time of year and I never miss an opportunity to take advantage of having this little gem on my doorstep.”
Keith Morton has also lived in Papplewick for many years. He remembers that “as a 4 year old, my parents took me to see the house in the process of being built; the year was 1938. No doubt this was a momentous and bold move on their part, but for me a whole new world opened. The house was on Papplewick Lane, three up from the River Leen. There were no numbers in those days—each house had a name—ours was “Millclose”. Just imagine a road one-mile long, properties both sides with no numbers. I recall many people asking for help. From the waterfall on the left was the Chapel. The preacher was Mr Randell. At the side of the chapel was “Warpmill yard” 2 cottages on the left and 3 to the right—these were occupied by farm workers.

Going up the hill to Moor Road were the woods Big Wood on the left, Little Wood on the right. Also on the right a footpath to Grange Cottages occupied by farm workers, one of whom was Mr Daws the hostler at the Grange. The horses were huge, at least that was my impression. Most I believe were Shires used for every task on the farm. I recall only one tractor, a ‘Case’ from America with no attachments just a draw bar.

At the junction with Papplewick Lane and Moor Road was a stile to The Moor. It was a true moor not used for agriculture but home to bird life – pheasant, partridge, peewit, snipe and larks, probably many others. The moor at sometime earlier between the wars was the proposed location for Hucknall airfield and a start was made, evidence of this the huge blocks of concrete in the ground.

Taking Moor Road towards the village, brings us to the Griffins Head pub. In the car park at the front the stone circular wall used to contain the trunk of a very large tree, probably an oak, though only a few branches remained when I was a boy. Taking the road towards Linby from the cross-roads, on the right was the forge where the farm horses were shod. Continuing along the road you came to the dam. A beautiful stretch of water with old established willow trees on the bank and on the opposite slope.

Looking back as children we had a charmed life, despite the war. Living at Papplewick left nothing to desire. Taking a ration book coupon to Mrs Stinson’s shop or the post office on Main Street for 2oz of sweets once a week, wanting caramels but changing to hard boiled because they lasted longer, if sucked not chomped.

At the Lido they had to take in two airmen to board at the start of the war – no choice; they were billeted if you had a room. Even now I remember one taking me to the Lido. Never before had I seen so much blue water in one place, it quite took my breath away, and on entering it did – cold does not quite give it an adequate description."

“More memories …”

“My involvement with the Moor Pond Wood Project began when I suggested at a Parish Council meeting that it might be possible to obtain some “millennium grant” money to ‘improve’ the wood. I’m sure none of the small group, which met under the chairmanship of Joyce Kendall, envisaged the way the project would develop.

Our first grant application, to Powervgen for the eradication of crassula (an invasive weed) in the pond, involved many hours of research before we eventually filled in the dreaded application form. To our delight, and amazement, our efforts paid off. A grant was awarded and work on the ground could begin.

We have learnt a lot in the past 10 years: applications for grants no longer fill us with dread and we’ve learnt who to ask for help and advice.

The Friends of Moor Pond Wood have worked to provide Papplewick with an asset of which we can all be proud. I would encourage everyone to consider giving their time and energy to continue to maintain and improve "our" wood and its industrial heritage.”

Warp Mill and the chapel - about 1910

Cutting the first track though Grange Cottage Wood - May 2005

Hedge laying in April 2002
When the Papplewick Mills stopped work in the 1820s, the system fell into disuse. In the 1850s the buildings were pulled down and the sophisticated water system was left to nature.

There are few records of what went on in Papplewick in those days. What makes our project area unique and valuable is that in similar schemes it is the buildings that have survived, not the original earthworks.

We began work in 2001 by uncovering the main sluice in Dam Banks. It was in good condition, despite being buried for more than 150 years and so, with a grant from the Lottery Fund, we engaged a firm of masons to conserve the stonework.

Evidence from that excavation suggested that there had been a second sluice in Dam Banks. This was located and a trial excavation in the summer of 2005 has shown that this is also well preserved. In the future we hope that it can be conserved, but in the meantime it has been reburied.

The archaeology of the area around the outlet of Moor Pond and alongside Papplewick Lane is complex. Excavations in 2002 established that the outfall to Moor Pond was bounded by stone walling—since conserved. A depression on the bank overlooking Papplewick Lane was examined and after almost a year of weekend working we had exposed a shaft over 4 metres deep. This would have housed the actual sluices that controlled the level of water in Moor Pond.

Late in 2009 we came across the remnants of a retaining wall alongside Papplewick Lane. It is not clear exactly what the purpose of the wall was, nor what is the significance of the several phases of changes that are preserved in its remains. In the future we hope to conserve the stone work, and provide interpretation panels.

In 2001, the Grange Cottage Woods site was a wilderness. There had been a pond here in the 18th century but it had silted, and then in the early 20th century it was filled with rubbish from Hucknall. The ground was littered with glass and debris, and pockmarked with deep, unstable pits where people had dug for old bottles. Using a grant, the group cleared the site and established a wildflower meadow. It has become a haven for butterflies and other invertebrates.

Evidence from that excavation suggested that there had been a second sluice in Dam Banks. This was located and a trial excavation in the summer of 2005 has shown that this is also well preserved. In the future we hope that it can be conserved, but in the meantime it has been reburied.

Late in 2009 we came across the remnants of a retaining wall alongside Papplewick Lane. It is not clear exactly what the purpose of the wall was, nor what is the significance of the several phases of changes that are preserved in its remains. In the future we hope to conserve the stone work, and provide interpretation panels.

In 2001, the Grange Cottage Woods site was a wilderness. There had been a pond here in the 18th century but it had silted, and then in the early 20th century it was filled with rubbish from Hucknall. The ground was littered with glass and debris, and pockmarked with deep, unstable pits where people had dug for old bottles. Using a grant, the group cleared the site and established a wildflower meadow. It has become a haven for butterflies and other invertebrates.

Evidence from that excavation suggested that there had been a second sluice in Dam Banks. This was located and a trial excavation in the summer of 2005 has shown that this is also well preserved. In the future we hope that it can be conserved, but in the meantime it has been reburied.

Late in 2009 we came across the remnants of a retaining wall alongside Papplewick Lane. It is not clear exactly what the purpose of the wall was, nor what is the significance of the several phases of changes that are preserved in its remains. In the future we hope to conserve the stone work, and provide interpretation panels.

In 2001, the Grange Cottage Woods site was a wilderness. There had been a pond here in the 18th century but it had silted, and then in the early 20th century it was filled with rubbish from Hucknall. The ground was littered with glass and debris, and pockmarked with deep, unstable pits where people had dug for old bottles. Using a grant, the group cleared the site and established a wildflower meadow. It has become a haven for butterflies and other invertebrates.

Evidence from that excavation suggested that there had been a second sluice in Dam Banks. This was located and a trial excavation in the summer of 2005 has shown that this is also well preserved. In the future we hope that it can be conserved, but in the meantime it has been reburied.

Late in 2009 we came across the remnants of a retaining wall alongside Papplewick Lane. It is not clear exactly what the purpose of the wall was, nor what is the significance of the several phases of changes that are preserved in its remains. In the future we hope to conserve the stone work, and provide interpretation panels.

In 2001, the Grange Cottage Woods site was a wilderness. There had been a pond here in the 18th century but it had silted, and then in the early 20th century it was filled with rubbish from Hucknall. The ground was littered with glass and debris, and pockmarked with deep, unstable pits where people had dug for old bottles. Using a grant, the group cleared the site and established a wildflower meadow. It has become a haven for butterflies and other invertebrates.

Evidence from that excavation suggested that there had been a second sluice in Dam Banks. This was located and a trial excavation in the summer of 2005 has shown that this is also well preserved. In the future we hope that it can be conserved, but in the meantime it has been reburied.

Late in 2009 we came across the remnants of a retaining wall alongside Papplewick Lane. It is not clear exactly what the purpose of the wall was, nor what is the significance of the several phases of changes that are preserved in its remains. In the future we hope to conserve the stone work, and provide interpretation panels.

In 2001, the Grange Cottage Woods site was a wilderness. There had been a pond here in the 18th century but it had silted, and then in the early 20th century it was filled with rubbish from Hucknall. The ground was littered with glass and debris, and pockmarked with deep, unstable pits where people had dug for old bottles. Using a grant, the group cleared the site and established a wildflower meadow. It has become a haven for butterflies and other invertebrates.

Evidence from that excavation suggested that there had been a second sluice in Dam Banks. This was located and a trial excavation in the summer of 2005 has shown that this is also well preserved. In the future we hope that it can be conserved, but in the meantime it has been reburied.

Late in 2009 we came across the remnants of a retaining wall alongside Papplewick Lane. It is not clear exactly what the purpose of the wall was, nor what is the significance of the several phases of changes that are preserved in its remains. In the future we hope to conserve the stone work, and provide interpretation panels.

In 2001, the Grange Cottage Woods site was a wilderness. There had been a pond here in the 18th century but it had silted, and then in the early 20th century it was filled with rubbish from Hucknall. The ground was littered with glass and debris, and pockmarked with deep, unstable pits where people had dug for old bottles. Using a grant, the group cleared the site and established a wildflower meadow. It has become a haven for butterflies and other invertebrates.

Evidence from that excavation suggested that there had been a second sluice in Dam Banks. This was located and a trial excavation in the summer of 2005 has shown that this is also well preserved. In the future we hope that it can be conserved, but in the meantime it has been reburied.
Robin Barton is a local resident who has created a model of the project area, which will be on permanent display at the Village Hall.

He writes, ‘My Uncle George, a teacher, often said ‘Words fail, see sketch’ and proceeded to draw something which illustrated, so much better than words, the point that he was making. In my case, it has become ‘Words fail, see model’.

It is so much easier, having seen the model, to understand how (in the 18th century) Robinson harnessed and managed water from the River Leen to turn the waterwheels that powered the machinery in his mills. The water was also used in the finishing processes of his products. The model indicates the huge manual effort which was required to provide dams, ponds, leats etc. All the water shown on the model (apart from the river itself) flows, or is stored, in facilities which were excavated by hand - a huge undertaking! No J.C.B. s in those days!

In 2005, having floated the idea for making a site model, and being unable to offload the job onto anyone else, I decided to ‘have a go’ myself although I had no experience of modelling, scaling or any of the other required skills, and only a sketchy knowledge of the history involved. Having suggested and received approval for the model’s overall dimensions, a suitable map was located and enlarged to the required size. I thank Denis Hill of Ashfield District Council for providing a year 1881, 1/2500 OS map that was enlarged to give a modelling scale of 1/1220 and an overall model size of 1.3 metres x 0.6 metres. The buildings shown on the model include St. James’ Church, Linby Mill (Castle Mill) Warp Mill, Grange Old Mill, Grange ‘New Mill’, The New Mill engine house, Robinson’s mansion, Grange Cottages, Main Street Cottages, The Griffins Head, the smithy, Grange farm buildings and the Papplewick dam boat house.

The base material is 50mm thick plastic foam heat insulation board. Lightweight, it proved to be easily worked and tolerant of adhesives and paint. With reference to mapped altitude figures I was able to quite accurately ‘excavate’ the river as it falls from north to south and grade the surrounding terrain to suit. Roads and field boundaries were transferred from the map. Materials were sourced and colours and textures chosen which would bring the scene to life. My thanks to Claire Hardstaff for pointing out that oil seed rape was not farmed in the 1700s - so that field was duly ‘re-drilled’ to show a cereal crop. Tim Barker’s observation that the scene was arboreally bereft, (or words to that effect) prompted the production of trees from various materials glued to the heads of mapping pins. These were scattered around to improve the overall picture and gave a more three dimensional effect, in fact they are so realistic that last Autumn all the leaves fell off!!! Thanks Tim for your constructive criticism.

A very challenging, but rewarding, new skill was marquetry. That was used to produce the title block, made from contrasting coloured woods. It was inset by the company who made the frame - Joinery By Design of Bolsover Street, Hucknall. It adds to the overall impact of the model. The wooden frame finishing was done by local craftsman Terry (Jock) O’Connor. My thanks go him for his time and skill in applying the very hard semi-gloss lacquer to the unstained Ash.

Thanks also to John Townsend for providing the laminated safety glass. The project has taken many hours of work. It was never boring, always challenging and some times frustrating. It is hoped that the end product is acceptable.

The funding for the model was covered by myself and the work dedicated to my late wife Wendy, who would, I think have approved of the job but certainly wouldn’t have been happy that her front room was used as a workshop. I have invoked ‘artistic licence’ to include a tiny white cross at the base of the church tower where Wendy’s ashes are buried. The frame and mountings have paid for by two generous donations from villagers.

My thanks to those who have encouraged and advised over the last five years especially the project’s Steering Committee. My thanks go him for his time and skill in designing and drafting the model (apart from the river itself) flows, or is stored, in facilities which were excavated by hand - a huge undertaking! No J.C.B. s in those days!

In 2005, having floated the idea for making a site model, and being unable to offload the job onto anyone else, I decided to ‘have a go’ myself although I had no experience of modelling, scaling or any of the other required skills, and only a sketchy knowledge of the history involved. Having suggested and received approval for the model’s overall dimensions, a suitable map was located and enlarged to the required size. I thank Denis Hill of Ashfield District Council for providing a year 1881, 1/2500 OS map that was enlarged to give a modelling scale of 1/1220 and an overall model size of 1.3 metres x 0.6 metres. The buildings shown on the model include St. James’ Church, Linby Mill (Castle Mill) Warp Mill, Grange Old Mill, Grange ‘New Mill’, The New Mill engine house, Robinson’s mansion, Grange Cottages, Main Street Cottages, The Griffins Head, the smithy, Grange farm buildings and the Papplewick dam boat house.

The base material is 50mm thick plastic foam heat insulation board. Lightweight, it proved to be easily worked and tolerant of adhesives and paint. With reference to mapped altitude figures I was able to quite accurately ‘excavate’ the river as it falls from north to south and grade the surrounding terrain to suit. Roads and field boundaries were transferred from the map. Materials were sourced and colours and textures chosen which would bring the scene to life. My thanks to Claire Hardstaff for pointing out that oil seed rape was not farmed in the 1700s - so that field was duly ‘re-drilled’ to show a cereal crop. Tim Barker’s observation that the scene was arboreally bereft, (or words to that effect) prompted the production of trees from various materials glued to the heads of mapping pins. These were scattered around to improve the overall picture and gave a more three dimensional effect, in fact they are so realistic that last Autumn all the leaves fell off!!! Thanks Tim for your constructive criticism.

A very challenging, but rewarding, new skill was marquetry. That was used to produce the title block, made from contrasting coloured woods. It was inset by the company who made the frame - Joinery By Design of Bolsover Street, Hucknall. It adds to the overall impact of the model. The wooden frame finishing was done by local craftsman Terry (Jock) O’Connor. My thanks go him for his time and skill in applying the very hard semi-gloss lacquer to the unstained Ash.

Thanks also to John Townsend for providing the laminated safety glass. The project has taken many hours of work. It was never boring, always challenging and some times frustrating. It is hoped that the end product is acceptable.

The funding for the model was covered by myself and the work dedicated to my late wife Wendy, who would, I think have approved of the job but certainly wouldn’t have been happy that her front room was used as a workshop. I have invoked ‘artistic licence’ to include a tiny white cross at the base of the church tower where Wendy’s ashes are buried. The frame and mountings have paid for by two generous donations from villagers.

My thanks to those who have encouraged and advised over the last five years especially the project’s Steering Committee who give so much of their time to this very worthwhile work.

In conclusion, I hope that the model will be valued by the community for its educational function and will serve to encourage more people to engage in the project and stimulate interest in the history of our village.

Next project - clean the front room!
The Moor Pond Woods Project

How to get involved

Have you got skills that you could offer?

Would you like to learn new skills?
The Moor Pond Woods project relies on volunteers. If you would like to support the project, and help us to continue our work, you could:

Join the ‘Friends of Moor Pond Wood’ to keep up to date. The ‘Friends’ meet on the last Wednesday of the month at the Village Hall in Papplewick. We have speakers on various popular topics, social events and outings.

Help with historical research. We need to try to find useful information from the Local Studies Library and Record Office. We can train you to search the archives.

Help with day-to-day maintenance—litter-picking, pruning overhanging vegetation and other ‘light tasks’.

Interested in archaeological exploration—Could you help with digging, clearing, recording?

Surveying—have you got access to survey equipment? We have a number of sites which are not fully mapped.

Fund-raising. Do you have good ideas and/or organising talent?

Construction, fencing and general labouring. Tools and training provided.

Observations and photography, help us to keep our wildlife records up to date.

Up-coming events

Saturday, 12th March 2011
Open Day

Wednesday, 30th March 2011
‘Friends’ meeting. Review and planning.

Wednesday, 27th April 2011
visit Bestwood Winding House.

Wednesday, 25th May 2011
talk about Butterflies.

Wednesday, 29th June 2011
woodland barbeque & skittles.

Weekend of 16th/17th July
National Archaeology Week
Come and help us to explore Grange Cottages Wood in detail. See the progress, and help if you have the time.

Phone the Secretary: 0115 9632057

Website: http://moorpond.papplewick.org/index.html